

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended) A process for the production of chewable coated cores ~~by~~ comprising the hard panning of chewable cores in a coating pan or drum wherein a syrup containing at least one of a crystallizable polyol~~[(s)]~~, a crystallizable sugar~~[(s)]~~ or mixtures thereof is intermittently sprayed over a rotating bed of the cores and ~~the~~ said cores are dried between sprayings with a flow of air, ~~said process comprising drying of the cores~~ being dried between sprayings by controlling effective parameters of ~~the~~ said drying air selected from the group consisting of air humidity, air temperature, air flow speed, air flow time, air flow direction and any combination thereof and stopping said drying before the relative humidity of the outlet flow of drying air has reached its basic level at which its gradient has flattened to a plateau, so as to cause a substantial residual moisture to remain in the drying coating layer at the start of a subsequent spraying phase.

Claim 2 (Canceled)

Claim 3 (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 2 1, wherein said parameters comprises the relative humidity of said drying air at an outlet of said pan or drum.

Claim 4 (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 2 1 or 3, wherein said parameters comprises the temperature of said drying air at an inlet of said pan or drum.

Claim 5 (Original) A process according to claim 3, wherein the relative humidity of the outlet air when starting said subsequent spraying is higher than the basic relative humidity level.

Claim 6 (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 1, wherein a number of coating cycles is performed, each coating cycle comprises a syrup application phase, an optional pause phase and a drying phase.

Claim 7 (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 3, wherein the flow of drying air to said bed is stopped before the drying is completed and the relative humidity of the outlet air is 1-10 percentages higher than its basic level.

Claim 8 (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 6, wherein the direction of the air during at least a part of said drying phases is direct with the air flowing from above the bed through the product.

Claim 9 (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 1, wherein the coating syrup contains about 40 to 80% of the total weight of a polyol selected from the group consisting of xylitol, sorbitol, maltitol, isomalt and mixtures thereof.

Claim 10 (Original) A process according to claim 9, wherein the polyol is xylitol.

Claim 11 (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 10, wherein the temperature of the bed of chewable cores is adjusted to a temperature of 25 to 45 °C for at least a part of the total coating procedure, and the drying during said part of the procedure is performed with air having an inlet temperature of 25 to 75 °C.

Claim 12 (Original) A process according to claim 11, wherein the bed temperature is 33 to 40 °C.

Claim 13 (Original) A process according to claim 11, wherein the inlet temperature is 40 to 50 °C.

Claim 14 (Original) A process according to claim 11, wherein the coating syrup temperature is 40 to 80 °C.

Claim 15 (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 1, wherein the coating syrup contains about 40 to 80 % of the total weight of a sugar selected from the group consisting of saccharose, fructose and glucose.

Claim 16 (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 1, wherein the coating syrup contains 1 to 20% of gum of the total weight.

Claim 17 (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 9, wherein the coating syrup comprises other polyols, flavors, pigments, special sweeteners, insoluble additives or mixtures thereof.

Claim 18 (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 1, wherein the coating syrup contains dissolved, suspended or dissolved and suspended xylitol, sorbitol, laciitol maltitol, isomalt, mannitol or mixtures thereof.

Claim 19 (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein the coating of the chewable cores is started by an initial sequence having a bed temperature lower than the bed temperature during the residual moisture retaining drying procedure.

Claim 20 (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein the coating of the chewable cores is finished by an end coating sequence having a bed temperature lower than the bed temperature during said residual moisture retaining drying procedure.

Claim 21 (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 19 or 20, wherein the direction of the flow of air during the initial coating, the end coating or both coatings is reversed such that the air flows from below the bed through the product.

Claim 22 (Currently Amended) A process according to Claim ~~2~~ 1, wherein the direction of the air flow, the air flow speed, the air flow time, the temperature of the air or any combination thereof is changed ~~several times~~ during the coating procedure.

Claim 23 (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 1, wherein the cores are coated with syrup until a desired coating thickness is provided and the coated cores are tempered after the coating for a time sufficient to allow crystallization of the polyol or sugar in said coating to provide a crunchy hard coating.

Claim 24 (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein said core comprises chewing gum.

Claim 25 (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 7, wherein the relative humidity of the outlet air is more than 3 percentages higher than its basic level.

Claim 26 (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 7, wherein the relative humidity of the outlet air is 4-8 percentages higher than its basic level.

Claim 27 (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 11, wherein the temperature of the bed is adjusted to a temperature of from 30 to 40 °C and said inlet temperature is from 30 to 65 °C.

Claim 28 (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 16 wherein the gum is Gum Arabic.

Claim 29 (Currently Amended) A process for the production of chewable coated cores by hard panning comprising:

spraying a syrup containing at least one of a crystallizable polyol, a crystallizable sugar ~~or mixtures and combinations~~ thereof over a rotating bed of chewable cores in a coating pan or drum;

stopping said spraying of said rotating cores while continuing rotation;

starting to dry said cores with a an inlet flow of air;

controlling the drying of said rotating cores by controlling effective parameters of the drying air selected from the group consisting of air humidity, air temperature, air flow speed, air flow time, air flow direction and any combination thereof;

~~and by~~ stopping said flow of drying air at a point before the relative humidity of the outlet flow of said drying air has reached its basic level at which its gradient has flattened to a plateau indicating that ~~when~~ a substantial residual moisture ~~content~~ remains in the drying coating layer;

starting a subsequent spraying phase by spraying said syrup onto the moisture containing layer of the previous spraying phase; and

repeating the spraying and drying of said rotating cores until a predetermined coating has been provided.